

2805 Overridge Dr.
Ann Arbor, Michigan
February 3, 2015

Michigan House of Representatives

Dear Representative,

Thank you for hearing our plea. I am a co-leader of a group of 220 physicians with a mission to reduce gun violence. Gun violence is a public health epidemic with a yearly toll of 30,000 deaths and 70,000 injuries.

Removing discretionary authority from local law enforcement will allow dangerous people to obtain concealed pistol licenses (CPLs.) Physicians are often asked to identify persons who they think are a danger and should not have a gun. Michigan's current system does just that. Our local concealed weapons licensing boards made up of sheriff, state police and prosecutors review applicants and can deny a problem person a license. Present law states "If the concealed weapon licensing board determines by clear and convincing evidence based on specific facts that the applicant poses a danger to the applicant or to any other person," it has the authority to decline the application. This authority is important. It saves lives.

SB 34 will abolish county concealed weapon licensing boards and transfer their duties to county clerks, the courts, and the Michigan State Police (MSP). The new licensing entities will not retain any discretionary authority. Under SB 34, Michigan will become a "no discretion, shall issue" state. Proponents of the change argue that we can streamline the process, but who would want to arm someone that police and prosecutors would refuse? Local authorities know their people and know many of those no one wants to arm.

Michigan's system works now and denials of CPLs are relatively rare. In 2011-2012, there were over 80,000 CPL applications. Only 255 were denied by the licensing boards. Local law enforcement often knows persons who are not safe to have a CPL. Examples of those denied licenses include former juveniles with serious records, domestic abusers with misdemeanors or no felonies because their victim would not go to court, serious alcoholics and drug abusers who will all be free to obtain a CPL under this new law.

The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence found that "Shall Issue" states that include Texas, Alabama, Florida, and Indiana subsequently issued CPL licenses to felons and other serious offenders.

For example, the Los Angeles Times looked at Texas and found that between 1995 and 2000; more than 400 criminals – including rapists and armed robbers – had been issued CPL licenses

2Megan O'Matz, In Florida, It's Easy to Get a License to Carry a Gun, South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Jan. 28, 2007

under the state's permitting law. A similar study by the South Florida Sun-Sentinel found that people licensed to carry guns in the first half of 2006 in Florida included more than 1,400 individuals who had pleaded guilty or no contest to felonies, 216 individuals with outstanding warrants, 128 people with active domestic violence injunctions against them, and six registered sex offenders. And these people were more likely to commit crimes.

More CPLs don't make you safer. According to a Violence Policy Center analysis of news reports, CPL permit holders have killed at least 14 law enforcement officers and 622 private citizens since May 2007. We know, too, that removing guns from violent people is dangerous. These facts may be why both the sheriffs and state police opposed this bill at certain stages. We don't want to lose officers and any

violent altercation can lead to the death of our men and women in uniform.

Dr. Daniel Webster, a national expert on gun violence wrote me recently that there is evidence that this change to a "Shall Issue" state will cause more injuries and deaths. Changing our system may expedite licenses, but more people will get hurt or even killed. The local eyes of our current boards are saving lives. And the state police will have to do new clerical duties that may divert their resources. This bill creates a problem that has both health and administrative costs. Please don't pass SB 34.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerry S. Walden, MD

Physicians for the Prevention of Gun Violence

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